

BOOK REVIEWS

TREATISE ON SURGICAL INFECTIONS. By Frank Lamont Meleney, M.D., Associate Professor of Clinical Surgery, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University; Associate Visiting Surgeon, Presbyterian Hospital, New York. Oxford Medical Publications, Oxford University Press, New York, 1948. \$12.00.

This volume represents the observation of a keen student of both bacteriology and surgery over a busy 25 years of active practice. As the author mentions in the preface, the advent of the sulfonamides in 1935 and later World War II postponed the publication of this work and, of course, greatly changed and augmented this study.

The purposes of the book, as stated by the author, are threefold: (1) To maintain high standards of sterile technique; (2) to elucidate the bacteriological problems of surgery; and (3) to describe the natural course of surgical infections with and without surgical procedure and their therapeutic aids.

Of interest is a foreword written in 1940 by Hans Zinsser, who read the first draft of the manuscript.

The first eight chapters are devoted to the study and maintenance of sterile technique. The next four carry out the second purpose of the book, namely the elucidation of bacteriological problems. The remainder of the work is devoted to the third purpose, as outlined above.

Of particular interest are the chapters on the uses of zinc peroxide and bacteriophage in active therapy of infection. The latter is chiefly of academic interest, and at least to date there is but little clinical application that is feasible.

As might be expected because of the rapidly changing picture of antibiotic therapy, the last chapter devoted to this subject is the least up-to-date and probably even misleading. Two cases are cited, one of anaerobic cellulitis of the arm and one of gas gangrene of the abdominal wall, in which the patient died despite penicillin and surgical incision. It should be noted that the total dosages of penicillin amounted to 280,000 units and 175,000 units, respectively. These doses are known now to be far too small, and in no way should these cases be used to illustrate the questionable value of penicillin in anaerobic infection.

The value of such a volume to the individual surgeon is of some question. Its place will probably be as a reference book in a well-equipped medical school library or the libraries of the larger hospitals.

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THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE EYE. By Hugh Davson, D.Sc. (Lond.), Honorary Research Associate, University College, London. 301 Illustrations. The Blakiston Company, Philadelphia, Pa., 1949.

This book, written by a former Canadian professor of physiology, who has had experience in teaching in ophthalmology, fills a long-felt need.

Following a description of the anatomy of the eye the book is divided into five sections which have the following titles: Intraocular Dynamics and the Transparent Tissues; The Mechanism of Vision; The Muscular Mechanisms; Visual Perception; and Optics.

The sections discuss the important parts of the subject without overwhelming the student with too much theory or too much detail. One of the subjects that has always been troublesome to the student of ophthalmology has been optics. As the author states, "The ophthalmologist is not concerned with formulae and still less with their mathematical derivation; he must understand sufficient of the general principles to enable him to speak intelligibly on the subject to the optician." With this in mind the author

has cut the formulae to a minimum and illustrates the text with clear, easily-understood diagrams.

The book is an excellent one and has already been adopted as the textbook on physiology in one of our well-known postgraduate courses in ophthalmology.

The format is excellent, the print being very readable and the illustrations being clean-cut and well printed. The book was printed in Great Britain and bound in this country.

The book can be recommended as an excellent text on the physiology of the eye for the student of ophthalmology, particularly the resident in ophthalmology.

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PSYCHODYNAMICS AND THE ALLERGIC PATIENT. By Harold A. Abramson, M.D., Associate Physician for Allergy, The Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, N. Y. A Panel Discussion. The Bruce Publishing Company, St. Paul and Minneapolis, 1948, for the American College of Allergists, 423 LaSalle Medical Bldg., Minneapolis 2, Minn.

Dr. Abramson has combined in an 85-page book two of his articles on the psychologic aspects of allergic manifestations, with a panel discussion by a number of internists, allergists and psychiatrists. The author "hopes that this first step in the coordination of organizational allergy and psychodynamics will lead to the ultimate recognition of the importance of emotional factors in the routine therapy of the allergic patient by both the allergist and the general practitioner."

In the first section, Dr. Abramson reveals briefly the early psychologic explanations for asthma and rhinitis by quotations from various authors from Hippocrates to Mackenzie in 1887 and Thorowgood in 1879.

In the second section the author finds himself at a loss to always explain or completely correlate his patients' symptoms by use of the immunologic model. He thus gives brief summaries from his patients' records in which he believes factors of emotion seem to play a major part. It is emphasized by Dr. Frank Fremont-Smith that the author has every right to do this, as he has gained respectability by having done important work on physicochemical mechanisms connected with immunologic processes in allergy.

In the panel discussion Drs. Frank Fremont-Smith, Edward Weiss, Hal Davison, Sandor Rado, O. Spurgeon English, M. Murray Peshkin, John A. P. Millet and John H. Mitchell ably discuss the importance of psychodynamic factors. They are in agreement that these play important roles in the symptoms of asthma, rhinitis and urticaria.

Drs. Leon Unger and George L. Waldbott commented on the dangers of attributing all unknowns to psychic factors while Rudolf L. Baer, principally interested in allergic dermatoses, stated that he had never seen a case of urticaria, atopic dermatitis or eczema in which a psychic factor could have been a major cause. He did admit that psychic factors may contribute through the autonomic nervous system.

It is admirable that several of the speakers had the temerity to admit that actually little is known, for example, about the detail of the mechanisms involved in asthma on the one hand and the neuroses on the other.

Dr. Smith brought out that the very respectable physicists no longer think of single causality and Dr. Abramson concludes that allergy and psychiatry should now be synthesized by the clinician in theory and practice.

In the opinion of the reviewer this book should be read with respect and interest by those dealing with these syndromes, but because of the multiple factors involved in many such problems a great humility should be practiced by both psychiatrists and others in relation to etiology.